



## Traffic Safety News and Facts for Employers November 13, 2006

### Latest Traffic Safety News

#### **Navy And Marine Corps Officials Take Hard Line On Alcohol-Related Crashes**

After the deadliest run of car and motorcycle crashes in years, frustrated Navy and Marine Corps officials are taking a hard line, especially against alcohol-related wrecks. The Navy has tallied the most traffic fatalities in more than a decade and the Corps had the heaviest losses in four years during the fiscal period ending Sept. 30, according to the Navy Safety Center. Marine Col. James F. Jamison, the center's deputy commander reported the loss of 144 sailors and Marines on the highways last fiscal year with about 30 percent of those crashes involving alcohol. A comparison of 378 sailors and Marines who died in wrecks off military bases from 2002 to 2004 concluded that: 30% were related to alcohol, 41% were linked to speeding, 51% were not using seat belts, 60% occurred on weekends, and 67% occurred at night. The Navy and Marine Corps have established several programs to help reduce crash risk.

#### **Schneider National Reports Sleep Apnea Screening & Treatment Program Saves Costs and Reduces Crashes**

Schneider National has published a white paper that reveals its sleep apnea screening and treatment program has generated a return on investment in the form of savings on medical costs, accident reduction, reduced turnover and increased productivity. According to a July 2002 study released by the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA), 28.1 percent of CDL holders have mild, moderate or severe sleep apnea. For more information on Schneider National, visit <http://www.schneider.com>

#### **PCs Will Soon Be On The Road**

CNW Marketing Research found in a September survey that 14% of prospective auto buyers under 30 want in-vehicle email and internet access, more than twice the number who wanted it in 2004. According to a USA Today article earlier this week, they will soon get their wish, "PCs are about to start showing up in vehicles. They will let people check e-mail, avoid traffic jams or make restaurant reservations via the Web while on the job." The idea could prove especially popular among younger drivers. A September survey found that 14% of prospective buyers under 30 want in-car e-mail and Web access, more than double the number who said they wanted it in 2004. USA Today reporter, Chris Woodyard wrote, "Automotive PCs will connect through regular cellular phone signals. But makers expect the in-car systems to eventually move to Wi-Max — high-powered Wi-Fi that blankets broadband access across cities — over the next few years."

#### **Hit And Run Pedestrian Crashes On The Increase**

A USA TODAY article reported on Oct. 17 that, "the number of pedestrians killed by hit-and-run drivers jumped 20% since 2000 and is at its highest level in a decade." According to reporter, Brad Heath, "the increase compounds the problems of investigating hit-and-run cases, which investigators say are among the most difficult crimes to solve because they often happen at night with no witnesses." Of the 4,881 pedestrians killed last year, 974 died in hit-and-runs, National Highway Traffic Safety Administration records show. The total number of pedestrians killed nationwide increased by about 2% since 2000, but hit-and-run deaths increased at almost 10 times that pace, the USA TODAY analysis found. Some drivers flee because of alcohol/drug use or to avoid other legal complications.



### **IBM Claims Automotive Voice Recognition Systems Capable Of Knowledge Management By 2011**

IBM is refining voice-recognition systems and predicts that by 2009 the systems will sense and adjust to driver's mood. By 2011, the systems will be capable of knowledge management including route planning. Driver distraction remains the key concern in voice-recognition software development. New-generation voice-recognition systems will be able to recognize when it's bad time to "speak" to the driver.

### **New Siemens Speed Detection System To Help Drivers Avoid Tickets**

Siemens AG will introduce in 2008 cars an automatic speed-limit detection system. The system has an onboard camera that reads speed limit signs and alerts drivers if they are going too fast. The system can automatically reduce cruise control settings to match the posted speed limit but will not automatically raise a car's speed to match a higher limit. For further information, visit [www.siemens.com](http://www.siemens.com)

### **Survey Finds U.S. Consumers Now Staying With Trucks And SUVs**

A study by Power Information Network, a division of J.D. Power and Associates found that a growing number of SUV and truck owners in the United States are opting for similar models when they trade in their vehicles, rather than buying more fuel-efficient cars. Recent lower gas prices are responsible for this good news for the Detroit 3, which have struggled through the year as high gasoline prices have pushed consumers opting for more fuel-efficient options away from the lucrative truck segment. The recent decline in gasoline prices brought an increase in owner loyalty rates for pickups and SUVs, which had been adversely impacted by higher fuel prices earlier in the year. In the large pickup segment, 68.9 percent of those owners trading in their vehicles traded for another in the same segment, up from 65.2 percent in the prior seven weeks, according to the study. In the large SUV segment, 39.6 percent of those trading, traded in the same segment compared with 37.2 percent in the prior period. In the mid-sized SUV category, 27 percent of those owners traded in for a vehicle in the same segment, up from 23.5 percent in the earlier period. These segments are important because they include many high-volume, high-profit models.

### **Some Motorists Continue To Challenge Red-Light Camera Use**

The cameras that take photos of motorists running red lights have been upheld as constitutional by courts in five states and Washington, D.C., but some car owners still refuse to concede defeat and are continuing to challenge them. Red-light cameras — in use in more than 100 cities, according to the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety — have set off resistance in many of the cities where they have been installed. Opponents in some cities have claimed they were denied their constitutionally protected right to due process because the red-light program presumes — that the vehicle owner is the driver at the time the violation occurs. State courts in Colorado, Oregon, North Carolina, Iowa and California, as well as the U.S. 9th Circuit Court of Appeals and the Superior Court in Washington, D.C., have rejected constitutional challenges to the cameras. Red-light cameras have been credited with reducing front and side crashes by 25%, according to a Federal Highway Administration study last year, but rear-end crashes were found to have increased 15%.

### **ATA Petitions NHTSA To Limit Truck Speed**

The American Trucking Association (ATA) plans to petition the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration to limit the maximum speed of large trucks at the time of manufacture to no more than 68 miles per hour. In a complementary move, ATA also plans to petition the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration to prohibit the tampering or adjustment of speed limiting devices to greater than 68 miles per hour. ATA filed these petitions on Friday, Oct. 20.



### **Progressive Commercial Analyzes Truck Crash Data**

Progressive Commercial analyzed crash data from vehicles it insures. Looked at "light local" vehicles including passenger cars, pickups, SUVs, vans, minivans and the truck category included tractor-trailers, dump/tow trucks, flatbed. Sixty-six percent of all crashes for light local, heavier trucks occur during traditional work hours. For further information, visit [www.progressivecommercial.com](http://www.progressivecommercial.com)

### **TRB To Cosponsor the 4th International Driving Symposium on Human Factors on Driver Assessment, Training and Vehicle Design**

TRB is cosponsoring the 4th International Driving Symposium on Human Factors in Driver Assessment, Training, and Vehicle Design on July 9-12, 2007, in Stevenson, Washington. The symposium will provide an interdisciplinary forum for scientific exchange among users of driving assessment tools, applications, and technology.

### **UNC HSRC Released Video Footage From Symposium On How Research Can Save Lives on Our Roads**

The University of North Carolina Highway Safety Research Center has released the video footage of an October 6, 2006, symposium that focused on the multidisciplinary past and future of highway safety research. The symposium was conducted as part of the Center's 40th anniversary celebration. The symposium reviewed highway safety accomplishments that have led to improved safety practices, policies, and legislation and examined the future types of research that will be required to enhance safety on the nation's highways.

### **Alcohol, Illegal Drugs, Violent Crime And Traffic-Related And Other Unintended Injuries In U.S. Local And National News**

The study seeks to establish the extent to which media coverage acknowledges alcohol's contribution to violent crime as well as to motor vehicle injuries and other injury incidents. Method: The study content-analyzes a unique sample, closely approximating national representativeness, of local and national television news, local newspapers, and national magazines randomly sampled during a 2-year period. Alcohol's role in violent crime and, to a lesser extent, in motor vehicle and other injury incidents is underreported relative to available estimates regarding alcohol-attributable fractions. Relative frequency of various news frames for coverage of alcohol and illegal drugs and differences in coverage of alcohol and illegal drugs as a function of the type of story and news medium are described. The underreporting in the United States of alcohol's contribution to serious and fatal injury from these causes may reduce public perceptions of alcohol-related risks, potentially influencing behavior, including public support of alcohol-control policies. This provides an opportunity for media-advocacy approaches to improve public health content of news coverage. Slater MD, Long M, Ford VL. J Stud Alcohol 2006; 67(6): 904-10.

### **An On-Road Assessment Of Cognitive Distraction: Impacts On Drivers' Visual Behavior And Braking Performance**

In this on-road experiment, drivers performed demanding cognitive tasks while driving in city traffic. All task interactions were carried out in hands-free mode so that the 21 drivers were not required to take their visual attention away from the road or to manually interact with a device inside the vehicle. Visual behavior and vehicle control were assessed while they drove an 8km city route under three conditions: no additional task, easy cognitive task and difficult cognitive task. Changes in visual behavior were most apparent when performance between the No Task and Difficult Task conditions were compared. When looking outside of the vehicle, drivers spent more time looking centrally ahead and spent less time looking to the areas in the periphery. Drivers also reduced their visual monitoring of the instruments and mirrors, with some drivers abandoning these tasks entirely. When approaching and



driving through intersections, drivers made fewer inspection glances to traffic lights compared to the No Task condition and their scanning of intersection areas to the right was also reduced. Vehicle control was also affected; during the most difficult cognitive tasks there were more occurrences of hard braking. Although hands-free designs for telematics devices are intended to reduce or eliminate the distraction arising from manual operation of these units, the potential for cognitive distraction associated with their use must also be considered and appropriately assessed. These changes are captured in measures of drivers' visual behavior. Harbluk JL, Noy YI, Trbovich PL, Eizenman M. *Accid Anal Prev* 2006.

## **News from the USDOT**

### **NHTSA's Final Rule On EDRs Pleases No One**

A new federal rule to standardize minimum requirements for event data recorders has ignited a firestorm of protests from groups that largely agree the information collected by the devices improves auto safety. Safety advocates say the rule doesn't go far enough while all U.S. and foreign automakers have asked the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) to rewrite the rule because they say it's too vague and will cost too much to implement. The new rule is set to take effect in September 2010. Automakers have asked NHTSA to respond quickly -- by March -- because product planning for 2010 models will begin as early as next year.

## **Work-Life**

### **Frightened NJ Boy Refused To Ride With Drunk Parents**

The Pittsburgh Post-Gazette reported that a NJ husband and wife will both face drunken driving and child endangerment charges after their 10-year-old, fearing for his safety, refused to ride in their vehicles and began running away on a highway over the weekend. Their case got police attention after a motorist saw the couple in their two vehicles and their 10-year-old son leaving the scene. The motorist called police, who picked up the boy running along the highway. The boy told police that he had been riding with his father who had been drinking and was trying to light a pipe containing marijuana when he crashed into a guardrail, the boy told police. His mother had been traveling in a car in front of them, the boy said.

### **New Teen Drinking Prevention Campaign To Target Parents**

A new prevention campaign sponsored by the alcohol-industry-backed Century Council targets parents who allow their children to drink. The campaign, called "We Don't Serve Teens," addresses research showing that 65 percent of underage drinkers get their alcohol from family or friends. Only 7 percent of youth report that they obtained alcohol from retailers who failed to check for identification. The group's message to parents is that allowing youth to drink is both dangerous and illegal. "Turning a blind eye is just as irresponsible as putting a drink in their hands," said Century Council chair, Susan Molinari. The group contends that lax parental attitudes about youth drinking undermine its prevention work. For further information, visit <http://www.centurycouncil.com>

### **Parents And Safety Advocates Push For Car Safety Bills**

Three common ways that vehicles hurt children are when they shift out of park, by back-overs, and when trapped by power windows. Back-overs are the most frequent and deadliest. Families impacted by these incidents are supporting two bills that would mandate new technology and new standards designed to stop children from dying in such incidents. It's a contentious debate in automotive safety, but one that's elicited more tears than action so far. While acknowledging the parents' anguish, automakers have fought their proposals to a standstill. They point to voluntary improvements, such as





transmissions that can't be accidentally pulled out of park, and argue the technology that might be required would cost hundreds of millions of dollars and is not fail-safe, each system has weaknesses. The industry also maintains that the best sensors and cameras on the back of a vehicle can't replace human eyes and ears, raising the question of how much responsibility the parents should shoulder.

### **Teens Text Message While Driving**

Liberty Mutual Research Institute for Safety surveyed teens on their biggest distractions while driving and found cellphone texting at the top of the list. "It was a surprise to us and certainly something that will be considered for future surveys," said David Melton, who headed the survey. Thirty-seven percent of teens cited text messaging as extremely or very distracting; 20 percent said they were distracted because of their emotional state and 19 percent cited friends in the car. According to Carolyn Gorman, of the Insurance Information Institute, "Teenage drivers are the worst drivers on the road, and if they're text messaging, it just adds to the danger, not only to them but to the rest of us." As dangerous as it may seem, most teens who text while driving aren't breaking any laws. Only Colorado, Delaware, Maryland and Tennessee have banned cell phone use among young drivers.

### **NSC Calls Teen Driving Deaths a National Crisis**

The National Safety Council (NSC) has called the teen crash rate a national crisis. Fifty percent of premature teen deaths are due to motor vehicle crashes and 50 percent of these incidents involve teen passengers. Graduated licensing programs have proven to be the most effective in reducing teen crashes. Parents have a major role to play in supervision and training. Teen driving should be family issue.

### **ASTHO Released Fact Sheet On Child And Adolescent Safety**

The Association of State and Territorial Health Officials (ASTHO) has released a new fact sheet, "Leading Causes of Injuries Among Children and Adolescents." The two-page publication covers information related to motor vehicle injuries, child and adolescent violence, recreational injuries, child maltreatment and suicide – as well as opportunities for prevention of child injury in each of these areas. To download this free resource, go to

<http://www.astho.org/pubs/AdolescentfactsheetfinalAugust2006.pdf>

### **International Traffic Safety News**

#### **Brake Offers Information To Manage Winter Driving Risks**

For motorists and fleet drivers the drop in temperature in October heralds trouble. According to the UK Department for Transport, fatalities among vehicle occupants rise dramatically in October and continue to rise through December. Additionally, traffic may be slow moving because of the weather, meaning trips take longer and drivers are more prone to tiredness. Road safety charity, Brake is aiming to help with an information sheet aimed at fleet managers to inform them of the dangers of the year's most dangerous months. For further information, visit [www.brake.org.uk](http://www.brake.org.uk)

#### **UK Drivers Ignoring Handheld Phone Ban**

Talking on a handheld mobile phone while driving has been illegal in the UK since December 2003. However, many drivers can be spotted with handsets pressed to their ears, oblivious to the illegality, danger and threat of a £30 fixed penalty. A Fleet News feature writer spent an hour on a weekday mid-morning watching for drivers on their mobiles. During that short period of time, he snapped more than 20 drivers who appeared to be chatting on their handheld phones disregarding the ban. Despite the threat of a penalty, too many people were talking on the phone while behind the wheel. Brake thinks more education of the drivers is needed to make them understand the dangers they're putting



themselves and others in. 'Education is important,' says their spokeswoman. "We need to see the government take it seriously and put up some kind of advertising campaign that will reach out to people to show them the dangers. We must ensure drivers' pockets are being hurt when they are caught and hopefully that would act as a further deterrent. The current fine is not high enough for people to stop what they are doing. 'Every individual driver out there needs to act responsibly and make a conscious effort not to use their mobile phone while they are driving.'" Julie Jenner, chairman of fleet managers' association ACFO, agrees that the penalties for talking on the move should be higher. "My advice to fleet managers is to very clearly define in their policies whether drivers are allowed to use phones in the cars or not."

### **Improving Fleet Crash Rates Goes Straight to Bottom Line**

SurePlan Australian says fleet crash rate and driver risk is as important as sales goals since reducing a fleet's average crash performance goes directly to bottom line. Direct and indirect crash-associated costs can be as damaging as a budget shortfall. The cost ratio between training drivers to avoid crashes is a 70 to 1 return on investment. The bottom line depends on cost savings as well as revenue generation. Even with insurance, crashes have add-on costs like towing, rentals, and legal costs. Also productivity disruption, the possible costs of injury to the driver or a third party driver. Driver risk mitigation training can deliver impressive cost-saving benefits. For further information, visit <http://www.sureplanaustralia.com/about.htm>

### **WA Calls For Technology To Curb Road Toll**

Safety experts in Western Australia (WA) say internal car cameras to monitor driver fatigue, audio seat-belt reminders and speed-limit technology should be considered to curb their shocking road toll. A multi-pronged approach is needed and authorities must make the most of new technologies. Dr Rao of Royal Perth Hospital has treated 16 percent more trauma patients this year than last. He says, "Education has a lower return and people don't respond. It doesn't reach the hardcore element - the young men. Young males, between 15 and 34 years old, are our peak trauma patients. For those drivers, take the decision out of their hands. We should look towards these intelligent transport systems." The Office of Road Safety has confirmed plans to test speed-adaptation technology that warns drivers they are speeding. A proposal will be put to the State Government in a year.

### **Queensland Law To Ban Companies That Profiteer By Alerting Motorists To Police Operations**

Companies that profiteer from alerting motorists to police operations such as random breath testing sites, speed camera and traffic jams at a cost of at least 76 cents a day. will be banned under new Queensland laws. The Cabinet just approved laws to be introduced into state parliament. This is in response to Road Spy, a company operating on the Gold Coast that profits from subscribers who are alerted to police road traffic operations. They send alerts to motorists advising them where police have set up random breath tests, effectively promoting drink driving as it is telling drivers which roads to avoid on their way home. Police Minister Judy Spence said the maximum penalty would be a \$7,500 fine for each offence.

### **Canada's Property And Casualty Industry Weighs Merits Of Mitigating Driver Distraction Through Policy Premiums And Coverage**

Canada's property and casualty industry is being encouraged to weigh the merits of mitigating driver distraction through policy premiums and coverage. Driver distraction or inattention is responsible for anywhere from 10-30% of car accidents - or more, depending on the source of the statistic. Some suggest a possible role for insurance as a form of financial incentive - or disincentive - through premium and coverage. One of the summary recommendations following the international conference



on distracted driving this past summer is to "investigate the role of auto insurance in reducing distracted driving, either through premium reductions (such as for drivers who pledge not to use telematics) or variations in coverage depending on specific driving circumstances (such as reduced coverage if drivers are found to be engaged in specific distracting activities at the time of a crash)." To date, no insurance company offers such incentives or disincentives specifically for behaviors related to distracted driving. The challenges inherent include the difficulties of consumer self-reporting: even some police accident report forms do not have adequate categories for all driver distractions.

### More Cameras To Catch Bad Drivers

The use of traffic cameras to catch drivers blocking box junctions or ignoring road signs could be introduced across England and Wales in 2008. The BBC News reports that the government is considering rolling out the use of the cameras already in place in London, where one million drivers were fined last year. The cameras used to enforce minor moving violations were found to be very successful in improving the traffic flow in London. By enforcing box junctions traffic congestion was reduced by between 10 and 20%. Road campaigners said the move could be seen as a "revenue raiser" rather than a traffic flow and safety measure.

### Self Regulatory Driving Practices Of Older Drivers

TRB reports that Australia's Monash University Accident Research Centre has released a report that examines self-regulatory practices adopted by older drivers in the Australian Capital Territory and in New South Wales.

### Know How Experienced Your Drivers Are

Richard Schooling, commercial director of leasing company, Alphabet advises organizations to check the licenses of all new employees regardless of age to see how long they have been qualified to drive since a driver's age is not necessarily an indication of how long they have been driving, fleet managers are being reminded. According to the Driving Standards Agency, 40% of people who pass their driving test are over 22. A quarter of a million people between 22 and 50 passed their test last year. According to Schooling, "It is a fairly common assumption that anyone in their mid-20s or older has held a driving licence for a number of years, but statistically it is not safe to do so. Being aware of these issues, and also of the fact that new drivers of all ages are more likely to be involved in an accident in their first two years, means that the employer can put appropriate risk mitigation measures in place."

### Errors And Violations In Relation To Motorcyclists' Crash Risk

This study was conducted in the UK to: (a) develop a questionnaire that reliably measures the behaviour of motorcyclists and (b) tests which types of behaviour predict motorcyclists' crash risk. A Motorcycle Rider Behaviour Questionnaire (MRBQ), consisting of 43 items to measure the self-reported frequency of specific riding behaviors, was developed and administered to a sample of motorcyclists (N=8666). Principal components analysis revealed a 5-factor solution (traffic errors, control errors, speed violations, performance of stunts and use of safety equipment). Generalized linear modeling showed that, while controlling for the effects of age, experience and annual mileage, traffic errors were the main predictors of crash risk. For crashes in which respondents accepted some degree of blame, control errors and speed violations were also significant predictors of crash risk. Implications of the findings are discussed in relation to deciding which countermeasures may be most effective at reducing motorcycle casualty rates.

Elliott MA, Baughan CJ, Sexton BF. Accid Anal Prev 2006.